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ABSTRACT

This paper surveys the demographic, historical, and research issues related to alternative education; describes successful models for disruptive and at-risk youth; and suggests how local areas might achieve safety in their schools. Programs for disruptive youth are forecast to grow through the 1990s; approximately 35 percent of school districts presently have alternative school programs. Alternative placement addresses a variety of needs for many groups, including juvenile offenders and students of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, who may simply require the individualized attention such schools provide. The report provides a list of alternative school classifications with the following major headings: (1) campus programs; (2) schools within schools; (3) intervention; (4) community programs; (5) correctional schools; and (6) separate facility schools. A resource guide briefly describes 20 successful alternative programs throughout the nation. The report concludes with a series of recommendations emphasizing that school district administrators must be committed to working cooperatively with community agencies and supportive of a comprehensive system of public school options. Appended are names and addresses of 21 organizations that promote alternative education, 5 pages of references, and 6 newspaper articles on alternative programs. (CJH)

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS FOR DISRUPTIVE YOUTH

NSSC RESOURCE PAPER

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS FOR DISRUPTIVE YOUTH

While most students who participate in American public education succeed, some muddle through the system with difficulty or react violently to the frustration traditional schooling creates for them. Whether problems are caused by the student, poor parenting, ineffective schooling or social alienation, the results are the same--high incidences of substance abuse, vandalism, crime and suicide. If schools are to be safe, alternative programs for disruptive youth must be developed, implemented and maintained.

A special hearing on alternative programs for troubled youth titled "First Session on Examination of Alternative Educational and Treatment Programs Aimed at Helping Troubled Youth and Adults" was presented before the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate, Ninety-ninth Congress, in October 1985. Testimony by education professionals, Justice Department officials, juvenile court judges and directors of alternative schools recommended that alternative programs be significantly expanded to address the problems of dropouts and delinquent youth in both the public and private sectors.

This growing need for alternatives in public schooling was also endorsed in the National Governor's Association's 1986 report, Time for Results. In this forward-looking document, the governors encouraged a variety of alternative education programs to increase student achievement and school authority while decreasing school dropouts. By 1987 more than 15 states had passed legislation to increase alternative options, according to an article by University of Minnesota researcher Joe Nathan in the June 1987 issue of Phi Delta Kappan. And in the June 24, 1987, edition of Education Week, a special 24-page report was dedicated to "Schools of Choice" where author William Snider declared "the concept [of choice] may hold vast potential for revitalizing the public schools."

Offering alternative choices in education is not a new idea to Americans. Early in our history, we recognized that the needs of a few often mirror the needs of many. From the establishment of Harvard College in 1636 to the magnet schools of today, American education is the collective result of countless alternative education programs. And, in the future, schools of choice may become the educational standard, expanding options for youth in an environment immersed in change.

The 1987 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools reported that 71 percent of parents support the idea of educational choice in their public schools. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, more than 100,000 students--nearly 20 percent of the district's children in grades 1-12--take advantage

of alternative program choices, according to a report presented to the National School Public Relations Association titled "Choices in Schools: What's Ahead and What to Do."

Alternative educational systems have enjoyed a wide variety of support in recent years. David Tyack's book, The One Best System, gave alternative schools credibility by questioning the assumption that there is only "one best way to keep school." Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman with his colleague and spouse, Rose Friedman, in their book Free to Choose, advocated that public schools offer a choice of courses. They maintain that a having a choice in schools would increase market pressures and result in the best services being offered at the lowest cost.

Most experts agree that alternative programs for disruptive and at-risk youth will grow through the 1990s. These programs promise to address a variety of needs for many students. For example, court schools, independent study and community school programs provide at-risk youth with alternatives to the traditional school setting. Such alternative placement is often required for juvenile offenders who pose a threat to the well-being of other students in regular schools. Students of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, on the other hand, may simply require the individualized attention alternative schools provide. Other alternative schools and programs focus on special education, school survival skills or employment preparation.

Overall, alternative schools have the potential to reduce dropouts, improve student achievement and parental involvement, reinforce class integration, and provide support for students dissatisfied with traditional programs. The future of American education may, in part, depend upon the public school's ability to provide these significant alternative services.

This paper offers a survey of demographic, historical and research issues related to alternative education. Successful models of alternative schools for disruptive youth throughout the United States are described. Recommendations and resources on alternative education complete the overview.

BACKGROUND

Alternative schools have helped shape the history of education, having grown out of emerging social needs created by shifts in values during periods of transition. These shifts, supported by demographic data, are again occurring and creating renewed interest in alternative education. To U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, choice is among "a cluster of ideas that fit together pretty well--ideas like accountability and school-level autonomy." The ascendancy of choice, he adds, will effect a "good market of discipline on the selection of teachers."

But finding and training teachers committed to the potential of alternative education may be a problem. According to Dr. Mario Fantini of the University of Massachusetts, considered by some to be the "godfather" of alternative schools for his work with the Ford Foundation in the '60s, no current school of education is offering a formal program in alternative schooling. "Until public schools begin to embrace diversification, schools of education are out of sync if they try to develop these alternatives," asserts Dr. Fantini in the June 24, 1987, issue of Education Week.

Although some educators view alternative schools as a way to eliminate problem students from the regular classroom, these programs more properly serve real student needs. C. Catherine Camp, a consultant for the Office of Research of the California State Assembly, feels there is a need to provide a variety of ways for developing student skills and competence. "The failure represented in dropping out is in large part a failure of the schools to provide an environment which can accommodate students with a variety of needs," Camp notes.

Harold Hodgkinson, in a statement titled "Meeting the Needs of Children and Youth at Risk of School Failure" reproduced in the June 24, 1987, edition of School Board News, said:

> As students have deviated more and more from the norm, the [educational] system has served them less and less well. We sometimes seem to say to them, "We've provided the system. It's not our fault if you don't succeed." Whether that attitude is right or wrong, the critical mass of at-risk children and youth has grown so large proportionately that we are in some danger of being toppled by our sense of rightness and righteousness. Instead of blaming the students for not fitting the system, we must design and implement a structure that provides appropriate educational services to those most at risk.

Through the years, various programs have attempted to address the problems of delinquency and dropouts. Often, alternative education is considered anything different from the type of schooling a majority of students experience. Alternative programs may be classified as campus programs, schools within schools, separate facility schools, community programs, intervention programs and correctional facilities. Daniel Duke in his book The Retransformation of the School suggests, "An alternative school simply is a school accessible by choice, not assignment."

Given that definition, it is not surprising that Hofsta University education professor Mary Anne Raywid refuses to label programs for disruptive students as alternative schools. "There is nothing chosen about them, it's something to which one is sent as a form of punishment," she states in an April, 22, 1987, Education Week article. Raywid emphasized that while both alternative schools and programs for disruptive students had their origins in the

1960s and '70s, true alternative schools provide a less restrictive, more stimulating educational environment than regular public school curricula. Discussing the growth in programs for disruptive youth, Raywid says:

> What happened, I think, is that some schools began setting up these programs, instead, on the basis that these are a bunch of troublemakers and we'd like to get them out of here or at least contain them. People began to worry about kids leaving schools and, rather than in-school suspensions, they thought, "Here's a way to retain youngsters and provide a disruptive kid with a better environment than being out on the street."

In the June 1987 issue of Phi Delta Kappan Raywid wrote, "Choice makes sense in educational terms...it enhances the efficacy of teachers, the accomplishments of learners, the satisfaction of parents, and the confidence of the public in its schools." She lists four key factors that play a vital role in schools of choice: differentiation, cohesiveness, autonomy and size.

In Alternatives in Education, authors Smith, Barr and Burke identified three criteria for alternative public education:

* Students must attend by choice.
* The school or program must be responsive to unmet needs.
* The student body must reflect the social mix of the community.

More recently, Cornell University professor Stephen Hamilton reported four criteria for successful alternative schools:

* Pupils must be placed accurately and appropriately.
* Barriers between regular and alternative school should be blurred.
* Parents and students must understand the selection process.
* The program must demonstrate that the end result is favorable for students, staff and the community.

While these criteria offer some direction, a definition of what ideally constitutes an alternative school defies educational experts. Adding to the difficulty is a spate of recent educational terminologies such as "open," "distributive," "community," "independent," "optional," "back to basics," "restructured" or "continuation" schools. Some schools use other terms such as "magnet," "latchkey," "individually guided education," "schools of choice" and "occupational" programs. Often such terms attempt to describe a particular program rather than defining the overall nature and content of alternative education in a school district.

W.L. McKinney, in a 1978 Qualitative Evaluation article, noted that alternative schools did not evolve as a natural outgrowth of their own positive philosophy, but from a reaction to what were viewed as negative features of conventional schools.

Darrell Santschi, in a May 9, 1987, Riverside Press Enterprise article titled "Continuation Schools are Havens for Misfits," found two continuation schools in his community to have enthusiastic students, parents and staff, a good reputation and high expectations of student performance. "One of continuation schools' biggest challenges is battling a poor public image born out of the '60s when these schools were regarded as a dumping ground," Santschi said.

But the debate continues to grow among professionals and parents on the issue of alternative school placement for disruptive students and youth at risk. Some argue that these schools are little more than youth prisons which encourage class distinction and alienation. Other critics point to a relaxation of standards, short class periods, diversion of resources from regular classes and lack of objective evaluation data as reasons to question continued support for alternative programs.

John Mesinger, writing in Behavioral Disorders, found some alternative education programs placed totally different categories and ranges of behaviorally disordered youth in the same setting. Mesinger, in identifying more than a third of incarcerated delinquents as disabled, warned that current stress-inducing trends are likely to increase the number of behaviorally disordered youth. And a 1985 study by Beauvais and Oetting found drug use in one alternative high school to be exceptionally high.

Criticisms aside, enthusiasts of alternative programs--including many students--emphasize the quality of education and individualized attention practiced in many alternative schools. An energetic and dedicated staff often provides the support necessary to modify poor behavior. As one student of the Alternative Learning Center in Vancouver, Washington, said, "When you choose to be here, you will work hard...get involved in the school's activities and within the community."

The National Alternative Schools Program and the National School Boards Association indicate that as many as 35 percent of public school districts have some form of alternative school programs. Minneapolis, Minnesota, has enrolled nearly 68 percent of its students in alternative programs, and in Montclair, New Jersey, all students in the district attend alternative schools.

Many forms of private education may be considered "alternative," and a growing market for educational options exists. Industry data indicate that private alternatives are growing at a comparatively faster rate than public programs, especially in preschool, child-care, remedial and juvenile correctional facilities.

According to a 1985 National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention document, "Reports of the National Juvenile Justice Assessment Centers," the number of status offender youths committed to private facilities rose dramatically after 1974. Lerman, a juvenile justice researcher, in the July 1980 issue of Crime and Delinquency, stated, "There have also been offsetting changes in the use of private facilities. In effect, there has emerged in unplanned fashion, a new youth-in-trouble institutional system." Since status offenders may not be institutionalized, private sector alternatives are becoming the school of "choice."

Despite this trend in the private sector, public schools are establishing alternatives within local school districts. During the 1960s and '70s, public alternative schools experienced a renaissance by tapping unmet needs in the areas of vocational training, exceptional education and the fine arts. The Parkway Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the first modern autonomous example of a public alternative school. Other programs, including the Metro School in Chicago, Illinois, and the St. Paul Open School in St. Paul, Minnesota, offer alternative models that form the basis for many successful programs for at-risk youth. Current programs include the Downtown Senior High in San Francisco and the Hope School in Inglewood, California.

John Hopkins University professor Gary Gottfredson, in his paper "Evaluation of Programs for Delinquency Prevention Through Alternative Education," found that in the alternative schools he studied, students and teachers felt safer, teachers were victimized less, attendance improved and teacher commitment increased. Alternative programs for disruptive youth share several characteristics proven successful in a number of schools. These include:

* Assignment by choice from several options provided by the school district, human services, probation or the courts.

* Daily attendance and progress reports.

* Continual monitoring, evaluation and formalized passage from one step or program to another.

* Direct supervision of all activities.

* Administrative and community commitment to the program and its financial suport.

* Mandatory parent and student counseling.

* Full-day attendance with a rigorous workload and minimal time off.

* High standards and expectations of performance.

* Curricula addressing cultural and individual learning style differences.

* Clear and consistent goals for students and parents.

* Motivated and culturally diverse staff.

* Democratic climate.

The democratic setting found in many of these schools engenders hope and confidence in students who may lack self-esteem. In addition, different learning styles are addressed in a more effective manner within the flexibility of a personalized alternative setting. Reporting in the June 24, 1987, edition of Education Week, author William Snider remarked:

> Anecdotal evidence on the effectiveness of choice is mounting. Interviews with officials involved in an array of plans produce consistent reports of better attendance rates, fewer discipline problems, lower dropout rates, and higher student achievement.

Alternative schools and programs will continue despite criticism. In fact, demographic evidence suggests these programs will grow in the future. As American society becomes more pluralistic, alternative education will play a larger role in serving diverse student populations. Perhaps the critical question for educators is not whether alternative schools will flourish, but in what direction traditional forms of education will proceed in the rapidly shifting environment of the late 20th century.

DEMOGRAPHICS

America faces significant shifts in population that will alter current social and educational agendas. These shifts have a direct effect on schooling for disruptive and at-risk youth.

Brad Edmonson, in the February 1986 issue of American Demographics, indicated that the growth in the number of children aged 6 to 13 will increase the demands on the nation's elementary schools. In addition, he reports the use of day-care alternatives by greater numbers of working parents and other related demographic factors will profoundly affect the future of public schools.

For example, the number of Asian and Hispanic children in schools has increased steadily since 1970, and America has become home to more of these immigrants than during the great European influx of the 1920s. Then, immigrant children matriculated successfully into schools that were largely European in subject matter. With today's predominantly Asian and Hispanic immigrant populations, however, there is little matching of curriculum to culture.

The concern that minority children are experiencing increased difficulty in the public schools was addressed by the National Education Association's president Mary Futrell in a June 27, 1987,

article in the Los Angeles Times titled "Minorities Hurt by New Standards." Futrell, commenting on the quality of minority education, said, "As we have raised standards, minority children have suffered because we don't have adequate support systems in place."

Even so-called "model minority" students were cited by Futrell and an NEA study group as suffering from mismatched expectations. Asian youngsters who have identity problems arising from learning difficulties often belong to gangs leading to "dropouts, suicide and in some cases homicide," reported Robert F. Chase, a Connecticut teacher who headed the Asian study group for the NEA.

Harold Hodgkinson reported the following statistics to the Forum of Educational Leaders:

* Today, children come to school speaking more than 100 different languages.

* Nearly 40 percent of all public school students are minorities.

* Since 1960, delinquency rates of youngsters age 10 to 17 have increased by 130 percent.

* The United States has the highest rate of teen-age drug abuse of any industrialized nation with more than 61 percent of all high school seniors having used drugs at least once.

Other factors also contribute to a changing national climate for public education. The May 14, 1986, edition of Education Week indicated the following:

* 25 percent of the 3.6 million children beginning public school are from families who live in poverty.

* 14 percent are the children of teen-age mothers.

* 15 percent are physically or mentally handicapped.

* 14 percent are children of unmarried parents.

* 40 percent will live in a broken home before age 18.

* 10 percent are from homes with illiterate parents.

* One-third are latchkey children with no one to greet them when they return home from school.

* More than 25 percent will never graduate from high school.

The needs of these disparate groups for special school services may clash with educational expectations of other population segments. The "baby-boomers" and their children are one example.

Baby-boomers of the 1950s and '60s now represent the most educated parents in American history. One in four men and one in five women in this generation has a college degree. These highly educated and affluent parents have been preparing their children for the future through preprimary educational programs in record numbers. The National Center for Educational Statistics estimated that 5.7 million children aged 3 to 6 were in preprimary programs in 1983, a 33 percent increase since 1970. This enrollment is estimated to increase 25 percent to 7.1 million in 1993. The Census Bureau reports that 20 percent of kindergartners were in full-day programs in 1973, increasing to 33 percent in 1983.

When these well-prepared, privately schooled children join the large immigrant populations in public school, diverse and probably conflicting educational demands will increase. It is likely these unprecedented demographic combinations, requiring a wide variety of educational services, will create new problems for policymakers faced with these realities.

Alternative schools, recommended by administrators, teachers or counselors but ultimately chosen by students and parents, may provide the key to preventing the repeated failure of segregated or minority dominated schools. According to researcher Denise Gottfredson, assistant professor at the University of Maryland's Institute of Criminal Justice and Criminology, a major delinquency prevention study revealed four safe school needs:

* The need for clear, fair and consistent rule enforcement that promotes a belief in the validity of school rules among delinquency prone youth.

* The need for teaching methods that promote academic success among low achievers and make these kids come to school more regularly.

* The need for ways to encourage attachments to teachers and other students.

* The need to strengthen schools as organizations by increasing communication, consensus and cohesion.

Alternative schools are the bridge between the present and future. They have the potential of providing immediate solutions while giving regular schools the time they need to develop effective remediation and prevention strategies. This transition function has historically been the purpose of alternative education programs.

AMERICAN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In colonial America, schools often taught traditions of the homeland or reflected the mission of the settlers. Monastery and

convent schools developed among the Spanish and French while apprenticeship, reading and Latin grammar schools were established by the British. Education was primarily for landowners, the aristocracy and the clergy.

Church-dominated schools soon emerged, paving the way for new special educational interests in the form of plantation, private and "free schools." The first high school was established in 1821, and during the latter half of the 19th century, alternative schooling concepts were developed by several pioneers. Alternative schools for special populations, including Indians and blacks, also were developed during this period.

Twentieth century progressive schooling began with John Dewey's book, School and Society, published in 1899. Dewey and others such as J. Liberty Tadd developed their own schools to support their theories. These schools led the way for the significant educational experimentation that continues today in the form of alternative programs.

The mandate of today's alternative schools is to provide a setting for educational innovation in addition to expanding opportunity. Alternative education must not divide, label or force students into a diminished environment. This balancing of tradition and opportunity is the challenge for alternative educators today.

RESEARCH

Studies specifically related to alternative education have focused primarily upon their organizational development rather than their effectiveness. Lack of performance data may be due, in part, to the fragile nature of alternative programs. Many programs, especially for at-risk youth, are often short-lived. Alternative education seems to be particularly sensitive to the ebb and flow of resources, public opinion and internal stresses. For these reasons, long-term studies of alternative programs are sparse.

Several studies offer evidence that alternative programs work. Peter Grey and David Chanoff reported in the American Journal of Education that graduates of the Sudbury Valley School, a primary and secondary free school, went on to colleges and good jobs. Research findings by Eileen Foley and Peggy Crull on New York City alternative high schools serving at-risk adolescents, indicated positive changes in student retention, performance and achievement. A three-year study by researchers Martin Haberman and Lois Quinn of youth released from correctional high schools found that only 1.6 percent of those released eventually finished high school.

A 1984 national study by Robert Calvert for the National Center for Education Statistics focused on alternative schools by non-school organizations. He found 28 other types of organiza-

tions offering training and education to 151.5 million persons compared with 80.4 million students of traditional educational institutions. The two largest providers of non-school education are religious (33 million) and business (30 million) institutions.

Finding, training and certifying instructors with the sensitivity, experience and expertise to effectively teach in alternative settings is difficult. J.A. Nirenberg, writing in Educational Administration Quarterly, found significant differences in the professional perceptions and expectations of alternative school staff compared to conventional teachers. Both teachers and students were found to respond well to alternative schools because they enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. However, in a 1976 issue of Curriculum Studies, Cusik, Martin and Palonsky found dismally low expectations of student performance: Students needed to do little more than be minimally compliant to pass their classes.

Two major studies that address performance evaluation have been conducted by W.C. Reckless and S. Dinitz (1972) and Martin Gold and David Mann (1984). The Reckless and Dinitz study was conducted over three years in Columbus, Ohio, for 7th grade boys identified as likely to become delinquent. During the study, 632 boys were assigned to in-school alternative classrooms taught by specially trained teachers. These three-hour-a-day classes were integrated within the regular school. The program included social skills training, reading improvement and class discussions.

At the conclusion of the study when participants were compared with their control-group cohorts, Reckless and Dinitz reported:

> On none of the outcome variables were the experimental subjects significantly different from the controls. This was especially and most painfully evident in the school performance and police contact data. There were no significant differences in the number of boys who experienced contact with the police, the frequency of such contact, or the seriousness of behavior. In regard to the school data, the dropout rate, attendance grades and school achievement levels...were very much alike.

Gold, commenting on the Columbus program, suggested the fixed curriculum, frequent examinations and discipline by isolation worked against the warm, supportive environment that he considers vital to reducing delinquency. Both Gold and Mann investigated this premise in their 1984-85 study of five alternative schools.

In Expelled to a Friendlier Place: A Study of Effective Alternative Schools, Gold and Mann were most interested in the social/psychological aspects of alternative education. Working from a theory that delinquency is the result of a psychological defense against a low self-esteem and that schools are a "significant provoker" of delinquent behavior, they studied alternative schools with:

1) A population of delinquent and/or disruptive youth who would otherwise be excluded from school;

2) Programs geared toward successful scholastic experiences through individualized curricula, progress grades and a suspension of the conventional teacher-student role;

3) Longevity; and,

4) Oversubscription, to provide experimental control.

Gold and Mann found that of the five schools meeting the research criteria, all reported a general decline in problem behaviors over the 14 months of the study. The study revealed that students in different emotional states responded differently to alternative schooling. Consequently, the study concluded that self-esteem attitudes were an important variable in changing disruptive behavior. Additionally, classes held in separate buildings during the school day and staff flexibility seemed to be significant factors of success.

Gold and Mann's conclusions provide an important key to the understanding of what, in their opinion, makes for effective alternative schools. In Expelled to a Friendlier Place, they wrote:

> When students in an alternative program develop more confidence in themselves as students, more commitment to their education, and better global attitudes toward school, improvement in their behavior and performance persist for most of them even when they re-enter a conventional program which they do not regard as so flexible.

Some researchers indicate that effective alternative schools will lead to better and safer public schools in the near future. James Piatt, writing in the Crime Prevention Review, noted that alternative schools can be effective agents in crime prevention. The National Crime Prevention Institute encourages schools to work with communities in crime prevention programs. And Daniel Duke, author of Managing Student Behavior Problems, found that alternative schools can effectively altered negative behavior. He wrote:

> Additional support for the utilization of alternative schools to combat student behavior problems comes from a national study of disruption in urban secondary schools. The finding is clear--larger schools experience a proportionately greater number of problems. The blue-ribbon National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education urged that "small, flexible, short-term, part-time schools be established and made available to all who are qualified and interested."

Gary Gottfredson in his paper "Evaluation of Programs for

Delinquency Prevention Through Alternative Education" described interim assessments of the effects of interventions targeted at specified subpopulations in alternative school projects:

* An alternative school in Compton, California, places high-risk youth in a small school and takes a personalized approach to education appears to have been remarkably effective in altering delinquency characteristics.

* An in-school peer counseling intervention program in the Chicago public schools has produced positive effects on belief in rules, delinquent behavior and school grades.

* A project in seven Charleston County schools blends a group of approximately 100 high-risk youths into the regular school. This alternative project increases attendance, promotes attachment to the school, enhances self-concept, reduces serious delinquent behavior and improves student employment.

* Interim results for a small alternative school in Miami suggests that there is significantly less absenteeism, fewer suspensions, less tardiness and more academic credit earned than in the regular public schools. The Miami project uses a token economy system, academic education and a professional/ vocational curriculum.

* Alternative projects in Charleston, South Carolina, Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Puerto Rico succeeded as primary prevention mechanisms while projects in Plymouth, Michigan, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were less effective.

While research efforts need to be expanded, many programs now operating offer promise without the benefit of a research foundation. These schools represent many possibilities for the future of American alternative education. There is little doubt in the educational community that alternative schools will continue to develop in response to a growing diversity of experience. With alternative programs for disruptive youth as an important transitory option for consideration, safer schools can and will be achieved.

MODEL PROGRAMS

According to the 1987 revised edition of Model Programs for High Risk Youth, published by the California Department of Education, "A caring attitude toward students among those adults involved with youth, and the realization of students as to their self-worth and potential," are the conditions for student sucess in schools. Model alternative programs should echo these goals.

The Governor's office of Planning and Budgeting in the state of Florida, for example, found in 1981 that alternative school programs needed to be "proactive rather than reactive, stressing intervention before disinterested and unsuccessful students become disruptive or drop out." Although these recommendations suggest alternatives for earlier grades, in 1987 there were no state initiatives for a comprehensive K-12 alternative school program.

The curriculum of these schools often varies depending on the local community's needs. This response to community needs is one of the strongest arguments in favor of adopting an alternative school program. As the June 24, 1987, Education Week reports:

* The City as School in Lowell, Massachusetts, operates as a "city in miniature," teaching students basic skills as they operate simulated banks and industries and run a would-be city government.

* The Dade County, Florida, Academy of Travel and Tourism near Miami International Airport, offers students preparation for careers in a number of travel-related businesses.

* The East New York High School of Transit Technology teaches students in the nation's largest city the fundamentals of mass transportation.

* In Detroit, Michigan, a new high school focusing on African-American culture gives students daily access to the city's African-American Museum.

* Atlanta's Archer High School instituted a retail magnet program with support from such businesses as J.C. Penney, Sears, Neiman-Marcus and the Georgia Retail Association.

* In Sarasota County, Florida, a public elementary school that emphasizes discipline and basic skills has a waiting list of 1,025 students--including 50 signed up by eager parents before their children's birth.

There are many alternative schools serving as prevention models that curb disruption, delinquency and truancy as well as programs for regular students. A classification chart of alternative schools is provided below, followed by a resource guide to alternative education.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL CLASSIFICATIONS

CAMPUS PROGRAMS

Mainstreamed Special Education
In-house Suspensions
Parents-at-school
Chapter 1 Programs
Restructured School
Behavior Contracts
Character Education
Behavioral Training
Counseling & Guidance
Ombudsperson (Mediator)
After School Clinics
Peer Programs
  Tutor
  Counseling
  Crisis Teams
Localized suspensions
Time Out Rooms

SCHOOLS WITHIN SCHOOLS

Detention Facilities
Remedial Education
Special Education
Individually Guided
Study Skill Units
Work Assignments
Year-round School
Special Degree Programs

INTERVENTION

Parent/Family Schools
Street Academies
Peer Court
Juvenile Hall School
Child Shelters
Residential Placement
Disruptive Youth School
Summer Traiining Institutes
Weapons Prevention School
Re-entry Classes
Special Say Class
Substance Abuse Programs
Court Schools

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Community Colleges
Transitional Schools
External Degree Programs
Folk Schools
Free Schools
Religious Schools
Parent Home Schools
Field Experience Programs
Correspondence Study
Store Front Education
Distance Education
Vocational Training/R.O.P.
Opportunity Classes
Private Schools
City-As-School
Service Contract
Day Care
Child Shelters
Residential Placement School
Community Day Center School
Day Care

CORRECTIONAL

Recovery Classes
Reform Schools
Direct Supervision
Private Treatment Centers
Mental Institution Schools
Court Schools
Camp Schools
Youth Authority Schools

SEPARATE FACILITY SCHOOLS

Schools of Choice
Continuation Schools
Experimental Schools
Extension Schools
Magnet Schools
Bilingual Schools
District or County Schools
Expulsion Schools
Community Schools
Independent Study
Migration Schools

DIVERSIFIED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES PROGRAM (DEEP), WICHITA, KANSAS

Designed for apathetic learners, discipline problems, poor attenders and potential dropouts in grades 9-12. Students spend class time identifying needs, formulating objectives, developing tasks to meet objectives, and presenting group and individual projects. Alternative ways of creating, gathering, developing and displaying information are taught. Students have extensive use of electronic and non-electronic media. A workshop atmosphere exists in a casual, open, trusting and task-oriented setting. Community resources are also utilized. A recent study demonstrated a 30 percent lower absence rate, dropouts reduced by 37 percent, and significant gains in affection toward others, respect and values. Ninety-eight percent went on to graduate from a local high school.
(316) 685-0271

THE LEARNING CENTER, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

An alternative school for disruptive students in grades 7-9 who have semester to one-year stays. A structured academic curriculum and separate facilities is similar to an "intensive-care ward in a hospital." The philosophy of the school is based on William Glasser's "reality therapy." Four hours a day are dedicated to language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, art and personal management. Students have 10-minute lunches with no free time, and well-behaved students receive a "successful day" certificate. Weekly evaluations demonstrate student success. A follow-up study of 206 of its students found that 26 percent who stayed in school did not have to be sent to the principal. Half of the students received no further suspensions and went to school 94 percent of the time.
(301) 841-6915

COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4, EAST HARLEM, NEW YORK

A systemwide choice plan for predominantly Hispanic youth weighted toward at-risk, single parent and poverty populations. Administrators and teachers have the freedom to design and implement school improvement options with student and parent choice. A special aspect of the program is that each alternative starts small and then expands based on demand. Climate is based on a one-room schoolhouse design, and individual attention for students is encouraged. Excellent attendance record.
(212) 860-5910

CLALLAM BAY PROJECT, CAPE FLATTERY DIST., CLALLAM BAY, WASHINGTON

A K-12 school system based entirely on alternative programs and parental choice. Community-based instruction is shared with

surrounding neighborhoods to instill involvement with the school. School and community councils often determine curriculum.
(206) 963-2324

CITY AS SCHOOL, NEW YORK CITY

An independent diploma-granting high school, its objective is to link students with the hundreds of learning experiences in the community. Participating community organizations include business, civic, political and social groups from newspapers to museums. Classes move from one experience to another--they choose from a catalog. There are two levels of teachers: advisers and resource coordinators. A Career Maturity Inventory has shown improvement in achievement, attendance and dropout rates.
(212) 691-7801

FOCUS DISSEMINATION PROJECT, SOUTH ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

The project meets the need of disaffected youth in grades 9-12. Students who lack motivation, confidence and have low self-esteem learn responsibility to self, school and society. Extensive group counseling (called "Family") using the school-within-a-school concept. One hourly meeting is with the teacher and "Family" of 8-10 students. The program gives students a classroom culture that demonstrates caring principles, improves basic skill, teaches effective human relations and gives each student reasons to be optimistic about the future. A highly structured program, materials are modified to meet student skill levels. A three-year evaluation demonstrated improved attitudes toward school, enhanced self-concept, increased academic achievement, and decreased disciplinary referrals, suspensions and absences.
(612) 451-6840

INTERCEPT, ROOSEVELT SCHOOL, OSSINING, NEW YORK

A teacher-training program for grades 9-12, it addresses problems of student discipline, truancy and chronic academic failure. The four areas of concentration are: effective discipline, classroom management, instructional skills and alternative school techniques. A combination of self-contained and elective vocational training classes are created for the upper grades. A learning cluster offers a preventative treatment program for ninth-grade students where 25 percent of the day is spent in special English and social studies classes. Statistically, the project has demonstrated students remain in school longer with improved attendance.
(914) 762-5740

SPRING CREEK COMMUNITY, THOMPSON FALLS, MONTANA

A combination school and therapy program, the Spring Creek Community has provided an intensive program for troubled teens whose problems range from subtance abuse to academic diffuculties. A six-week wilderness survival experience includes two

parts: "Survival," a trip covering 60 to 100 miles of terrain to learn the survival skills of the American Indian, and Challenger," a group course in rock climbing, kayaking, canoeing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. After completing the wil- derness experience, the 13- to 18-year-olds stay in a controlled residential 70-bed facility. Counselors follow-up with mandatory parent participation and visits to students' communities in the Southeast, Los Angeles, Seattle and New York City.
(406) 827-4344

ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC SKILL BUILDING PROGRAM, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Begun in 1973, the Oakland Street Academy combines personalized guidance and teaching using community-oriented teachers. Classes are from 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. with additional afternoon classes available. The student population is 150. Emphasis is on rigorous academic progress using alternative methodologies and materials. Cooperative learning is utilized.
(415) 532-7556

EARLY PREVENTION OF SCHOOL FAILURE, PEOTONE, ILLINOIS

A program is available in English and Spanish that is designed to prevent school failure through early identification and remediation of developmental learning deficiencies that would adversely affect school performance.
(312) 258-3478

POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES TO STUDENT SUSPENSIONS (PASS), EUCLID CENTER, ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

Major activities of the PASS program include individual and group counseling, assisting school staff with students and affective education. Teachers and paraprofessionals use time out rooms to discuss problems with students. A vital component of the program is counseling for parents. Students with problems learn how to interact more effectively in their school and home environments.
(813) 823-6696

COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF KERN COUNTY, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA

An educational program for youth that would not receive an education in other settings. The school staff creates an individualized course of study for each student, which assists students in increasing academic skills, progressing toward graduation, and helping with social skills and work habits. Course outlines and the independent study course agreement clearly describe all expectations. Grades 7-12 are eligible for enrollment on referral only. A minimum of one hour each week with teacher and 20 hours of coursework each week is required. This is a stand-alone independent study project. A full battery of testing is done for each student before placement.
(805) 328-0212

OPERATION SUCCESS, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Provides support services to grades 9-12, both dropouts and students at risk. Programs include initial diagnostic vocational evaluation and functional assessment, educational internships, outreach services, counseling, vocational training, career development, community resource services, part-time jobs and referrals.
(212) 741-7004

IN-HOUSE SUSPENSION CENTER, ALBANY, GEORGIA

Program serves grades 7-12 with seven professional and three paraprofessional staff. Students are sent to the program by principals, deans and assistant principals for infractions such as fighting, insubordination, truancy, substance abuse, code violations and vandalism. All students are tested for reading skills. One hour a day is spent in counseling with a psychologist, and the rest of the day is instructional. Home-school visitors make scheduled parent contacts. Other agencies in the community provide personnel and services to students.
(912) 431-1282

SATURDAY SCHOOL, ROSEMEAD, CALIFORNIA

The goals of this program are to keep students in school, reduce high recidivism of other suspension programs, increase supervision, offer counseling, enhance a positive self-image and save money. The difference in this program rests with its unique positive and intensive counseling sessions offered on Saturdays.
(818) 573-5820

ENTERPRISE HIGH, MACOMB COUNTY, MICHIGAN

This alternative school concept serves economically disadvantaged dropouts aged 16-21. Since 1985, the program has expanded to 10 programs in three Michigan counties with more than 500 students. Students engage in business ventures, making products or providing services that students market. After returning costs to the school, students divide profits. Virtually all students report feeling more successful. Emphasis on how to earn a living.
(313) 286-8800

SPECIAL EDUCATION LEARNING CENTER, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

A therapeutic alternative school for students who have demonstrated violent, aggressive and acting-out problems in regular settings, the school provides continual support and positive rewards. Students may not refuse to work and cannot be violent, which is accomplished through physical restraint or a controlled time out (CTO). There is no freedom to come and go once on campus. Significant improvements have occurred in student behavior.
(203) 722-8795

NEWTON COUNTY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL, COVINGTON, GEORGIA

Since 1977, this program has been serving youth in grades 6-12 with funds from state and local resources. Capacity is 35 students from a total district population of 3,700. The school is a short-term, structured environment for disruptive students. Statistics show reductions in regular school suspensions after involvement in this program. Daily activities include an hourly diary, academic tasks, counseling and special projects. Small classes are the key to the program's success.
(404) 787-1330

PEER TUTORING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION, LAKE WASHINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT, KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON

Consisting of both elementary and secondary peer tutoring programs, this special program provides structured lessons and frees teachers to assume a managerial role, monitoring several projects simultaneously and revising problem lessons. Using a mastery based tutoring model, a skill is identified and taught every day until students learn it. Positive class climate, active supervision and daily measurement are accomplished.
(206) 828-3200

ALTERNATIVE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM, FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA

This program offers various alternatives for students to complete their high school diploma at their own pace. Students age 16-18 may choose the continuation school. There are opportunity classes for 14- to 16-year-old students. Special programs include English as second language and basic literacy. Classes are strategically located in the community to combine with vocational programs. A full re-entry component for older students is also provided. Both certificated and classified staff work in the community to recruit students for this alternative program.
(714) 671-4352

CONCLUSIONS

Protecting the safety of students is the highest priority of all schools. But suspension or expulsion policies to ensure safety in the schools may put the local community at risk, and communities are now insisting on proactive solutions. This dilemma has led, in part, to the current wave of interest in alternative education.

Several key elements from this survey on alternative schools for disruptive youth have emerged:

* Whenever possible, students and parents should choose from options provided by various agencies in the community.

* All agencies should communicate and cooperate on developing options for the student. This includes sharing records.

* Alternative schools should have the consistent enforcement of a minumum of easily understood policies and rules stressing responsibility and consequences of inappropriate behavior.

* Reinforcement of positive social skills training in an academically and culturally mixed setting with peer intervention and privileges for positive behavior.

* Alternative climate should reflect the philosophy that it's better and easier in the normal, comprehensive school environment, which encourages students to want to return to the regular school setting as soon as possible.

* Programs for disruptive youth should be small with low student-adult ratio. Staff must be firm, fair and consistent. Administration should be flexible and nurturing.

* School district administration must be committed to working cooperatively with community agencies and supportive of a comprehensive system of public school options.

* Program should increase achievement and success experiences while also increasing attachments to school and teachers.

* Learning, teaching and cultural styles must first be matched to the student, then expanded.

* Students who are anti-social, unusually anxious or depressed do better in the regular, comprehensive school setting, according to some studies.

If a preventative and cooperative network of alternatives are created within a community, student disruption can be decreased and school safety achieved. Researchers agree that most disruptive youth need a sound educational experience if they are to succeed--and that success depends on the school district's commitment to alternative programs.

RESOURCES/ORGANIZATIONS

A number of organizations that promote alternative education may assist those who seek more information:

The Center for Options in Public Education
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405
(812) 339-3480

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
(617) 353-3309

National School Resource Network
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815
(301) 654-8338

National Coalition of Advocates for Students
100 Boylston Street, Suite 737
Boston, Massachusetts 02116
(617) 357-850

The Clearinghouse on Educational Choice
1611 North Kent St., Suite 805
Arlington, Virginia 22209
(703) 524-1556

Institute for the Development of Educational Activities
University of California at Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California 90024
(213) 825-8327

The Sequoia Institute
1822 21st Street
Sacramento, California 95814
(916) 454-4505

CADRE, College of Education
600 S. College
University of Tulsa
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74104
(918) 592-3079

National Institute of Justice/NCJRS
Box 6000
Rockville, Maryland 20850
1-800-851-3420

Center for Organization in Schools
John Hopkins University
3505 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218
(301) 338-7570

American Educational Research Association
1230 17th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 223-9485

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
125 North West Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 549-9110

Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091
(703) 620-3660

National Association of Independent Schools
18 Tremont Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(607) 723-6900

National Community Education Association
119 North Payne Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703)683-6232

Phi Delta Kappa
P.O. Box 789
Bloomington, Indiana 47402
(812) 339-1156

Council for American Private Education
1625 Eye Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-0016

National Society for Internships and Experimental Education
122 Saint Mary's Street, Second Floor
Raleigh, North Carolina 27605
(919) 834-7536

National Association for Legal Support of Alternative Schools
P.O. Box 2823
Sante Fe, New Mexico 87501
(505) 471-6928

National Association of Private, Nontraditional Schools
1129 Colorado Avenue, Suite 320
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501
(303) 243-5441

National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools
1289 Jewett Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
(313) 769-4511

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Los Angeles Times
2 Part I/Sunday, February 22, 1987

Pittsburgh Magnet Schools Attract a Crowd, Controversy

By TARA BRADLEY-STECK,
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Edward Cohn, a 38-year-old rabbi and father of two girls, suspects that he started some of the trouble.

Eager to enroll one of his daughters in a special public school program, Cohn parked his blue Chevrolet sedan outside the sign-up site at Reizenstein Middle School one cold Monday night because "the whole area just had a sense of expectation about it."

Like police on patrol, two women in a Ford station wagon drove by, recognized Cohn, and immediately picked up a car telephone.

Within minutes, a posse of about a dozen parents equipped with books, blankets and thermoses set up a line of rickety lawn furniture and cots on the sidewalk. Cohn immediately phoned his wife for supplies and took to the line himself.

As word of the ragtag queue spread, more parents arrived and the ranks burgeoned to about 150. Self-appointed leaders held roll call every three hours and policed the line for intruders.

Long, Cold Wait

The six-day vigil through record-breaking cold, sleet and snow took place in the name of education. Everyone wanted to make sure that their child got into the Pittsburgh Public Schools' first-come, first-served magnet school program—a program School Supt. Richard Wallace ruefully said is turning into a "status symbol."

One worried parent said, "The program wasn't designed to be exclusive, but it has become exclusive."

The city began its magnet program in 1979 as a way to ease the tension of desegregation. The 19 magnet programs offer a limited number of students training in specialized subjects, from French for first-graders to law and public service for seniors, as an inducement for parents to send their children to schools outside their neighborhoods.

"The thinking is that you've got to provide something at the end of the bus ride in order to get people to voluntarily transfer from one school to another that may be farther from their home," said school district spokeswoman Pat Crawford.

Half for Blacks

Half the places in each magnet program are allocated for black students and the other half are for whites and others. Most of the district's non-magnet schools are integrated less thoroughly through busing.

When the magnet schools were introduced, they attracted 1,500 students. This year, 8,500 of the district's 40,000 pupils are in magnet programs.

"Parents will do whatever it takes" to get their children in a magnet program, Crawford said.

"They don't want to leave it to chance. If it means camping out for days, or getting their friends to help, they're willing to do it. They've rented campers and they've even paid people to stand in line for them."

The magnet schools have prompted thousands of parents to pull their children out of parochial or private schools and others to leave some of the finest schools in the state to move to Pittsburgh.

But Wallace and others also worry that the schools' popularity has "gotten out of hand," discriminating against single parents and other families who cannot afford to take off work to stand in line and detracting from the district's regular schools.

"In all honesty, we may have overplayed those cards in the sense of trumping up the magnet programs," Wallace said.

Meanwhile, some parents think that they have been dragged reluctantly into the magnet frenzy.

"It's a crazy thing," said John Canning, 47, a teacher and father of two girls. "I'm not so sure these schools are so much better than the regular schools. But they sell these magnets to you and you take your kids to see them.

"My daughter wants this language middle school. If that's where she wants to go and there's an option, it's a terrible thing to say, 'No, you can't go because I don't want to stand in line.' "

Small lines for the more popular programs formed in 1981. But the two recent sign-ups for 1987-88 set new records and exposed a growing problem.

Last fall, tempers flared during the sign-up for kindergarten and elementary magnet programs.

School officials had warned parents that they would not honor any line that formed before 7 a.m. the day of registration. But several hundred people ignored the warning, forming a line several days in advance.

When newcomers tried to crash the line, some of those who had waited through rain and windy weather shouted threats and profanities, while others burst into tears.

Fearing violence, security guards formed a new line by taking three parents from the original line for every one of the new arrivals.

Neither side was pleased.

"I feel angry and betrayed," said Stephanie Flom, who had camped out in the line.

"I do not think I am terrible. I think they are sheep," said Grace Leffakis, who cut into a line to get her daughter into a first-grade program.

"I feel that every member of the school board should be indicted for inciting a riot," William Mehall later told the board.

Dozens of cities around the country have magnet programs, and each has its own often-complicated method of enrolling students to ensure racial balance. But few, if any, do it like Pittsburgh.

Where there is less demand for programs, there are few problems. Parents simply show up the day of registration and fill out an application. In the more popular programs, though, 80% of the spaces are filled on a first-come, first-served basis by registering in person, not via mailed applications. Twenty percent are filled by lottery.

Ironically, the parents who stand in line for days would not have it any other way, saying the current system guarantees a school full of students with parents interested in education.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

L.A. Times
Feb. 2, 1987

Associated Press

Parents and others camp out to ensure a place in line to sign up children for Pittsburgh's magnet schools program last November. Some parents hired surrogates to hold their spots. At right, Erica Prentice, 13, limbers up before her ballet class at the Rogers School for the Performing Arts in Pittsburgh.

Making Sign-up Easy Opposed

"If you go to a lottery where you just have to fill out your name and mail it in, everybody would do it, including the parents who really never did care," said Howard Siegel, 36, who stood in line with Cohn for six days to enroll his sixth-grader in a classical academy.

"It would dilute the system to allow just anyone in," said Ron Charapp, 38, who enrolled his son in the same school.

Simply expanding magnet programs is not necessarily the way to temper their snowballing popularity, Wallace said. Not only do parents like the exclusive aspect of a magnet, but they also often will not enroll their children in a new program until it has proved its worth.

The superintendent said the enrollment procedures have to change, but he is not sure how.

"Somehow we need to preserve the strong, intense commitment by parents and yet do it in a way that doesn't discriminate against people who can't do what these folks can do," he said. "And at this point, I don't have an answer."

Some parents choose magnets because they do not like the city schools to which their children would be assigned, and others simply want their children to attend an integrated school.

Many say they like the magnets because of their distinctive environments or curricula. Also, magnet schools usually have fewer students than regular schools.

"It is integration at its finest, and that warms the cockles of my liberal heart," Cohn said.

"It's a no-nonsense environment. They're not going to have any discipline infractions. And it's exciting. My wife and I spent a day in the language middle school, and we were enthralled. I didn't even want to leave."

For students interested in a particular field or style of learning, the magnets are an attractive alternative to conventional liberal arts-oriented studies.

Magnet kindergartens have become popular with single parents and families with two working spouses because they offer a full-day program rather than the usual half-day.

At the Homewood Montessori Elementary School, children learn at their own pace through a process of trial, error and self-correction using special learning materials. The system uses no letter grades or honor roll and encourages a non-competitive learning atmosphere.

Contracts Signed

At the traditional academies, students and parents sign a contract to abide by the school dress code of no T-shirts, tight clothes or regular blue jeans and the academy's attendance and homework policies. In exchange, the principal agrees in writing to provide a safe, strict and caring environment.

The Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps magnet is confined to electives and extracurricular activities in which students learn leadership, map reading and current events.

Other programs, such as international studies, classical studies, high technology and practical arts, tailor the entire curriculum around the area of interest.

For example, English in the law and public service magnet emphasizes mysteries, detective novels and trial stories, and social studies focuses on government, politics and economics.

Biology in the international studies magnet is world ecology. English in the high-tech magnet emphasizes scientific writing.

Although Wallace is proud of the magnets, he worries that the regular neighborhood schools are being overlooked.

"The thing that concerns me is, a lot of parents don't know about and have never set foot inside their neighborhood schools," the superintendent said.

Last year the top elementary school in the city was not a magnet, but rather a small, regular school in a blue-collar neighborhood, Wallace said. The top middle school was a magnet, but the top high school in the city was not.

In addition, the district has produced four state Teachers of the Year in the last five years, and all were nominated from regular schools.

"Magnet schools are different," Wallace said, "not better."

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Banner photo by Mark Lyons

Naomi Griffith (right), a teacher at Dry Valley school, talks with a student while Principal Marcus Durley listens in the background.

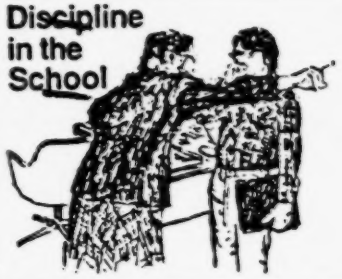
Alternative schools key on positives

Last in a five-part series.

By Kathleen Wilson
Banner Education Writer

COOKEVILLE — Marcus Durley wants to save the students other schools have given up on.

Discipline in the School



The students come here to Dry Valley Alternative School, usually because regular public schools in Putnam County can no longer deal with them. But Durley, who is principal of the school, believes everyone can make it.

"There's good in every last one of these kids," he said in a recent interview.

The trick, he believes, is to find the positives and magnify them.

"We're trying to create a feeling that they are somebody and they can be somebody," he said. "Academics is secondary."

Dry Valley is one of 82 alternative schools in the state serving 107 public school systems, including Metro. Most of them were started through the state's 1984 Better Schools Program in an effort to remove disruptive students from the classroom.

Alternative schools are located in Cheatham, Montgomery, Coffee, Dickson, Humphreys, Maury, Sumner, Williamson and Wilson counties. Both the Tullahoma and Manchester city school systems also have alternative schools.

Dry Valley's history began five years earlier in 1979 when Putnam County needed a place to educate students who were hard-core discipline problems.

"It had sort of a punitive atmosphere," Durley said. He has worked to change Dry Valley so that today it resembles a country school.

The red brick school stands alone about 3 miles outside the city limits, an American flag waving in front. Inside, the rooms are plain and the classes are limited to fewer than 10 students each.

Approximately 40 students attend Dry Valley. New students are carefully monitored and have few privileges. As they prove themselves, they gain their freedom.

Please see SCHOOLS, page A-11

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Nashville Banner, Friday, November 21, 1986

FROM PAGE A-1

. . . Schools

"This basically is a country school with old-fashioned ways," said Wanas Martin, a social studies teacher. "You discipline them hard, and you love them hard."

One of Dry Valley's success stories is a soft-spoken young woman named Kim Flatt, who refused to attend a regular public school.

"I didn't like school," said the Cookeville resident. "They couldn't get me to go to school. They couldn't get me to be around people. I was real, real shy. I didn't want to be out of the house. Mr. Durley got me out of being shy."

Ms. Flatt came to the school in early 1980 at age 14. In 1983 she graduated, a feat she said would have been impossible for her in a regular public school.

Ms. Flatt, now an educational aide at the school, points to its small size as a key to reaching students. She says the students know the teachers care.

"They care about the kids' problems," she said. "They may care (in regular public schools), but there are so many (students), they can't give them the individual care like we do."

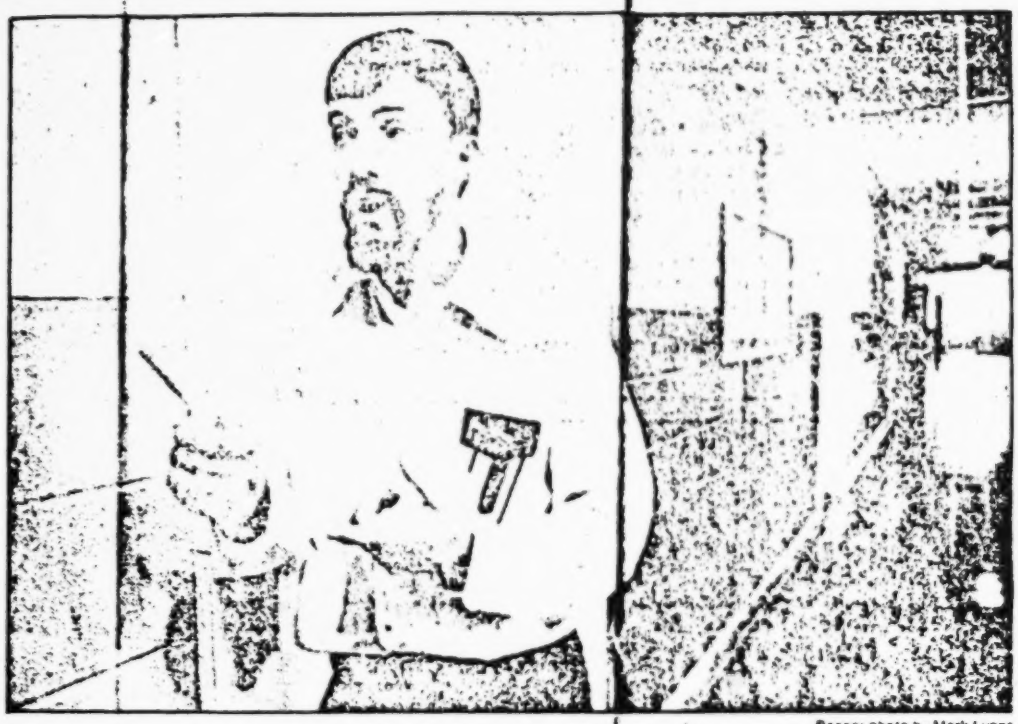
Durley said that besides not wanting to attend school, some of the students had been disruptive in class. About one-third have drug abuse problems. Some had been placed in juvenile or psychiatric institutions.

"If you can get them in a situation where they're not odd, they're just another kid," he said. "And that's all they want to be."

Durley said about one-third of the Dry Valley students graduate either from a regular high school or from the alternative school. Three-fourths of the remaining students enter the job market or study for high school equivalency diplomas.

Durley said he does not know what happens to about one-eighth of the Dry Valley students, but he and other educators say alternative schools work.

Joel Walton, who oversees the programs for the state Department of Education, said reports from school superintendents indicate the alternative schools are "very effective."



Banner photo by Mark Lyons

Dry Valley Principal Marcus Durley says he finds students' best qualities and tries to magnify them.

"Superintendents are very, very positive," he said. Walton has also found that 88 percent of the 2,800 students who were enrolled in these programs last year returned to regular school. In the previous year, 68 percent of 1,300 students in these programs returned to school.

The schools give students who have been identified as repeated discipline problems the chance to start over, said David Jones Jr., a Metro administrator who works with the alternative school here.

"Once a student gets a reputation for being a bad student, not only does he have to maintain his reputation but other kids help him," Jones said.

In Metro, he said, 90 percent of the students in the alternative school passed the Tennessee Proficiency Test, a ninth-grade examination of basic skills. Nearly all the students have earned credits for the courses they're taking, he said.

School officials and teachers said only a tiny fraction of their students need to be placed in alternative schools.

Metro teacher Norman Jones said counseling, conferences with parents and isolating students from their classmates works for the average discipline problems.

"For the hard-core, nothing works except time. They get old enough to drop out or old enough to straighten up."

Jones said the teacher's best option for discipline problems "is to make a kid feel like you care," an idea with which Cookeville's Durley agreed.

Durley is convinced that all his students can be salvaged. In fact, he said his school's biggest problem is getting students to go back to regular school.

"Here, because of the size, it's not as easy to be left behind," he said.

Many of the students have been paddled and suspended from regular school for their behavior. Durley said he rarely paddles and never suspends.

Instead, he places them in a room or a section of a room where they cannot interact with other students. He also counsels them and tries to find something positive for them to latch onto.

"Some of these children come from horrendous home environments," Durley said. "(There's a) lack of love, structure and no parental influence in some of these families. If we can deal with the emotional problems, a lot of times the discipline problems go away.

"If you want to get kids off drugs, don't give them drug rehabilitation. Give them something they like better than drugs."

Durley said that while drug rehabilitation works in some cases, it won't work by itself. Counselors must try to find the underlying causes for drug abuse.

"Why did the child start?" he said. "It wasn't born that way. To me these things are fruits of a bad tree. We can keep picking fruits (like) attendance, drugs, bad behavior.

"You have to go to the root of the problem."

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Juvenile Justice
MAR-26-87

JUVENILE CRIME FROM BAD TO WORSE

Court sends some young offenders to private school

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

PHILADELPHIA — Carlton McKoy strolls along a sidewalk at a private school, beneath gas lamps and past 19th century, French-style dormitories. He's headed to a classroom where he's learning to make eyeglasses.

Last summer, the 17-year-old boy lived one block from South Division Avenue and Hall Street SW, in a neighborhood where some lots are vacant, except for the abandoned cars, and where nearby street corners are often deserted at night, except for the prostitutes. He stole cars and burglarized homes and businesses.

Glen Mills Schools, a privately owned school 21 miles southwest of Philadelphia, is the "punishment" for McKoy's crimes.

"I always had this theory that if you do the crime, you should do the time," McKoy said during a recent interview at the school. "I'm paying for it, really, but I'm free, free to walk around. You can actually lay in bed and be amazed that you're up here. I know I deserve worse than this."

Courts in states from the East Coast to as far west as Iowa send some of their toughest juvenile offenders, mostly gang members, to Glen Mills, which has room for 550 boys.

McKoy is one of eight boys from Kent County and 38 from Michigan living at Glen Mills. A juvenile court judge sentenced him there in August 1986.

Other Michigan counties which send boys to Glen Mills, listed with the number of boys now at the school, are: Genesee, 11; Washtenaw, five; Kalamazoo, five; Ingham, four; St. Joseph, three; Ionia, one; Macomb, one.

Kent County Juvenile Court began sending boys to the school two years ago and last year paid $132,000 to keep them there.

Court officials say it's too early to tell how much the program has helped boys from here. A 1988 study by a Philadelphia college shows 40 percent of the boys released from the school are arrested again and 31 percent are locked up within 27 months.

It's difficult to tell how that compares with other programs. In a recent study in Columbus, Ohio, the U.S. Department of Justice found that 70 percent of children arrested for a violent crime were arrested at least once again. Many boys at Glen Mills are violent offenders.

Glen Mills sits atop 800 acres of hills, near farms, expensive homes and just blocks from the barbed-wire-topped fences of Delaware County Prison.

Its 11 dormitories — three-story, brick buildings with steep, slate-colored roofs — surround a long, narrow courtyard that dips in the middle. If the dorms sported vines, the campus would look like an Ivy League college.

The school was founded as the Philadelphia House of Refuge in 1827 by a group of Quakers who wanted to keep children out of adult prisons. It was renamed Glen Mills and moved to its current site in 1889.

At first, Glen Mills was a farm program divided into sections for blacks and whites. In 1925, school leaders realized city boys weren't farmers and started a job-training program.

The school became a tough place. Boys walked in underground tunnels from building to building. Troublemakers were locked in solitary confinement. Boys raped other boys and beat on them for telling.

In late 1973, a boy tried to escape by setting a fire in his locked room. He was killed and his roommate severely burned. The school nearly went bankrupt after the state condemned many of the buildings. Judges stopped sending boys there.

The state asked Cosimo "Sam" Ferrainola, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh and expert on juvenile crime, to study the program and find ways to save it. He was hired to run the school in 1975.

Like Father Flanigan, who founded Boys Town in Nebraska, Ferrainola said he believes there are no bad boys.

"These kids are behaving to survive, to belong and to get status, just like we are," said Ferrainola, who raises his voice like a clergyman reaching the part of a sermon meant to make his followers shake under the weight of their sins.

Boys discuss a problem during a morning group therapy session.

He preaches from a red leather chair at a conference table in his office, elbows resting on arm rests, a thick, unlit cigar between the first and second fingers of his left hand.

"I'm not justifying anyone who hurts another person, and I'm not justifying stealing," he said. "I'm saying, 'Yes they've done bad things, but no, they're not bad kids.'"

When Ferrainola took over, he took the locks off the doors and closed the tunnels. There are no fences. Last year, about 20 boys ran away, according to school officials.

Today, students play basketball, lift weights and wrestle in the gym and swim in the gym's pool. They bowl in their own four-lane bowling alley. The school just opened a two-floor arcade with pingpong tables, pool tables, pinball machines, video games and two snack bars.

The boys eat four meals a day.

"Kids are going to bed hungry at most institutions," said Ferrainola, a 55-year-old Sicilian who loves food. "When you're hungry, you're irritable. When you're irritable there's more chance for fights, riots, attacks on each other.

"A lion is a very gentle creature when it's full. You can almost pet that darling thing. But that's a vicious animal when it's hungry."

Ferrainola formed his own gang, the Battling Bulls. The 300 or so boys who belong to the "gang" can earn $25 a week for working on campus. They help run the school, confronting other students who break rules.

Every morning, boys gather in a circle in their dormitory for a group session. On a recent morning, a dozen boys in one dorm scolded Alex DeMontigny, a 15-year-old cocaine dealer from Georgetown, Md., because he caused trouble and argued when roommates confronted him.

Ferrainola won't hire social workers. He says the boys don't need counseling as much as they need opportunities — an education, job training or a position on the football team.

"We're going to teach you life skills, teach you a new way of life that's so much nicer than the way of life you've been used to, where people help each other, where people around you care about each other, where you take pride in yourself, pride in your school, where you learn, 'Hey, I'm OK,'" Ferrainola said.

Boys can earn a high school diploma there and take classes at a nearby community college.

Slower students, most with the education of fourth graders, attend The Learning Center — three cramped classrooms in the basement of a school building.

"We've had kids who come in here in the ninth or 10th grade who don't know their alphabet," said Rema Pikes, coordinator of the learning center. "They left here reading at a second- or third-grade level."

At the trades building, boys can learn new jobs, maybe how to build houses, run a printing press, create ceramic lamps or make eyeglasses.

Every winter, the school takes 180 boys to Florida for vacation.

The boys play sports — from golf to football, from tennis to wrestling — against other Pennsylvania high schools.

Since it began competing against other schools 1984, Glen Mills has won state championships in gymnastics and powerlifting. Its basketball team has taken the district title the last two years.

More than 70 boys have gone on to college since 1982, many with athletic scholarships.

John Barr, former head football coach and athletic director, said sports gives the boys pride.

"We want our kids to feel as though they are in a fine school, a prep school," Barr said. "We're not a penal institution; we're a school, kind of like a prep school for kids who have gotten into some trouble."

Other schools in the league slowly are accepting Glen Mills.

Bill DeNardo, a 15-year-old sophomore who attends an upper-middle-class high school in nearby Rosemont, Pa., recently wrestled a 16-year-old Glen Mills student and was pinned in the second round.

After the match, DeNardo learned his opponent, Donald Blakely of Boston, had been arrested for 35 assaults.

"Coming in, I was a little intimidated," DeNardo said. "Our team is a little more pumped up. But it's never brought up in conversation that these guys are a bunch of murderers. We know this is a reformatory school and they've got problems and they're going to be

The school's peaceful setting is quite different from the tough streets most of the boys came from.

Glen Mills School director Cosimo "Sam" Ferrainola.

tough."

Ferrainola said his school is "destroying myths" about juvenile delinquents.

"The myth is that they don't want to learn, and they're nothing but troublemakers in school and you'll never be able to educate them," he said.

"The myth is, 'The reason the kids aren't learning is because their parents don't care.' That's a cop-out. There's no parents here to help their kids.

"These kids have so much potential, so much ability. They are fine young men in the wrong environment."

Still, he knows he can't save every boy.

"As quickly as we can change their behavior here, if we send them back to the same environment, the same community, with little or no hope, then the gang will change the behavior back," he said.

> *"I'm not justifying anyone who hurts another person, and I'm not justifying stealing. I'm saying, 'Yes they've done bad things, but no, they're not bad kids.'"*
>
> Sam Ferrainola, school director

Carlton McKoy, the 17-year-old who stole cars and burglarized homes and businesses near Hall and Division, said Glen Mills has taught him he can live without crime and without old criminal friends. Before he was sent there, he committed at least 40 crimes, he said.

"Behind our backs, they (friends) laugh at us," he said. "They're laughing at us because we're locked up and they're out there. But when we get out there, we'll have something to show. The only thing they'll have is maybe a longer criminal record."

Jack McLaughlin teaches class at Mountain View High School.

Alta Kavanaugh works with student at Alessandro High School.

Continuation schools are havens for misfits

Gina Martinez
'I didn't get along . . .'

Story and photos
by DARRELL SANTSCHI
The Press-Enterprise

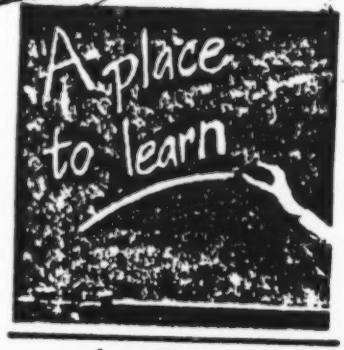
HEMET — Tana McCann said she "just didn't fit in" at Hemet High School.

"I've lived here all my life," she said, "but I felt like an outcast. I knew everybody, but I didn't fit in. I wasn't a jock, so I was treated like dirt. The students. The teachers. Everybody. They acted like they didn't care."

Gina Martinez stayed home from San Jacinto High School for nearly half of her freshman year. Her grades plunged, as did her hopes for a high school diploma and a career as a veterinarian.

"I didn't get along with a lot of people and they didn't get along with me," she said. "I was new and they all thought they were tough. They pushed me around."

McCann and Martinez, both 18, were ready to drop out of school. Both say their lives were turned around when they enrolled in a continuation high school.



A weekly series
profiling area schools

McCann is a student at Alessandro High School in Hemet, where she will receive her diploma next month. Martinez is a student at Mountain View High School in San Jacinto, where she has made up enough credits in the last 19 months that she expects to get her diploma in adult school next year.

The two continuation high schools have become havens for misfits — students who cannot, or will not, march to the tune of school bells in the crowded hallways of Hemet and San Jacinto high schools.

Alessandro High School, the smallest of 12 schools in the Hemet Unified School District, has 207 students attending three hours of classes a day in five different shifts.

Mountain View High School, the smallest of five schools in the San Jacinto Unified School District, has 37 students who attend classes four hours a day.

The two schools are creatures of a state law that requires every person under the age of 18 to attend school unless they either have a high school diploma or pass the California High School Proficiency Examination.

"California, I think in its wisdom, has set up something it calls continuation classes," said Jim Smith, Alessandro High School principal. "Continuation classes allow kids to attend school part time who have not experienced a lot of success in their previous schooling. That's what we're all about."

Some students are transferred to the school for disciplinary reasons. Others have trouble keeping up with their classwork. Others hate homework. Still others have demands on their time from outside the classroom.

At Mountain View, two-thirds of the students have outside jobs.

"We get the students who are behind in credits, far behind in credits," said Jack McLaughlin, a lead teacher at Mountain View who doubles as school administrator. "Some of them have had problems with the law. A lot

(See SCHOOLS, Page B-4)

Riverside, CA Press Enterprize 5-9-87

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of them have lost interest in school."

"If there is any way to characterize virtually all of the students who come over here," said Smith, of Alessandro, "it is that they have been poor attenders. They haven't been going to class."

McCann, the Alessandro student, said she had 35 absences from one class in 4½ months of school at Hemet High.

"I'd go to school in the morning, stay for lunch and just leave," she said. "I couldn't stand that place. They told me they were going to expel me and I said, 'Why can't I go to Alessandro?' They put me on the waiting list. I waited and waited and finally, they put me in."

Now, McCann said, she thinks of Alessandro as "my second home."

"It's more like a family than a school," she said. "It's more open. I can go talk to any of the teachers about my deepest problems and they understand. I don't get any hard looks."

Sinde Shaffer, 18, who earned enough credits at Alessandro to get her diploma in April, two months early, said she liked the school for the same reasons.

"Everyone gets along here," she said during a return visit to the campus recently. "We have a personal growth class here that helps everyone learn to communicate. We learn to talk about our problems. The class gets very close and we don't share what goes on in there. They teach us not to put each other down."

Shaffer said teachers at the school "are more like friends. You can open up to them about the most troublesome things. They helped me a lot last year when I got pregnant. I could talk to them about it. They helped me figure out what to do.

"I ended up not having the baby," she said. "They (teachers at the school) helped me go through it because that's really a hard thing to go through. They even helped me get a doctor and a professional counselor to talk to.

"Nobody here passes judgment," Shaffer said. "You are what you are and that's it."

School officials not only helped her earn a diploma, but also found Shaffer a job. She works as a typist and file clerk in the school district's purchasing department.

"Sometimes we're more successful than others," said Smith, the school principal. "You motivate kids in the classroom by helping them be successful and to begin to feel good about themselves. You give them positive feedback."

Students feel more successful and less pressured in a continuation school, he said, because class sizes are smaller and students work at their own pace.

"You take a kid out of a class with 35 other students where he's

Matthew Buselt
Setting his own pace

not going well and he's dropped out mentally," Smith said, "...you begin to teach him at a level at which he can learn — and he's going to experience success. He's not going to feel like a number. He's going to feel wanted and accepted. I think that sets the stage down the line for some real learning to take place."

In all, Alessandro has classes in 60 subjects, or about 80 percent of the courses offered at Hemet High School. They are offered in what Smith calls an "inter-disciplinary mode."

What that means, he said, is that in a social studies class with 18 students, "three might be studying government at different levels, two might be working on world history and five others might be working on U.S. history. Occasionally, the teacher might pull all of them together. If they are going to deal with some current event, all of those things might apply."

The school also offers its own version of physical education. With no athletic field on the tiny half-acre campus, students play basketball and volleyball on an asphalt court. In some cases, Smith said, students are given credit for participation in YMCA programs, for Jazzercise classes they take outside school and for programs at a nearby racquetball club.

Students said they gladly trade the frills of Hemet High School for the informal atmosphere of Alessandro, where students address teachers by their first names.

"You have more freedom than at the high school," said Debbie Lopez, 16, who expects to graduate next year after losing a semester's worth of credits at Hemet High last year for poor attendance.

"I never went to school when I was at the high school because I didn't like the school," she said. "It was too crowded. When I was in elementary school, I went to Winchester School. It was a little school. Then, when I got to Hemet High, it was a real change. I like the little schools."

It is the smallness that sets the continuation school apart from Hemet High, says Alta Kavanaugh, an English teacher who has divided her 16-year career between conventional high schools and continuation schools.

"What I find is that there is much more of a sense of community here," said Kavanaugh, who now teaches at Alessandro. "You have 200 students as opposed to 2,000. It makes for much more individualized contact with the students.

"A lot of kids at the (Hemet) High School wind up earning a diploma by just doing seat time," Kavanaugh contended. "It is possible in a comprehensive high school to just sit in a seat and...often times that student is passed. Here, a student really has to produce."

Kavanaugh enjoys being on a first-name basis with her students. She says it helps the students and teachers to "relate to each other as human beings."

At Mountain View High School in San Jacinto, McLaughlin doesn't want his students calling him Jack.

"We don't allow that here," he said.

"My own philosophy is that when it comes to discipline, there has to be a separation between the teacher as a friend and the teacher as a professional. We try to be consistent with our discipline, so they know the standards and that we're not going to be soft on them. A lot of them don't have that consistency at home."

, Student Matthew Buselt, 17, says Mountain View's discipline "is strict, but it's not as strict as the high school. I like working at my own pace."

While a student at San Jacinto High early last year, Buselt said, he wondered if he would ever get a diploma. At Mountain View, his schoolwork has improved so much that he was named "Warrior of the Month" in April, an honor named for the school mascot.

In the classroom, said McLaughlin, teachers at Mountain View "have to be more patient" with students than their counterparts at San Jacinto High School.

While some students are less than excited about enrolling at the school, McLaughlin said, "Once they get here, a lot of them don't want to go back to a conventional high school.

"They feel comfortable," he said. "We, as a staff, are concerned about them. We talk to them. I've had four kids in my office today talking about personal problems. They talk to me about everything from problems with their parents to thinking about running away, suicide or whatever. We sit and talk and they get their feelings out."

In addition to the counseling, he said, the school offers about 30 basic courses and such electives as the fine arts and work experience.

One of their biggest challenges, students and faculty members said at both schools, is battling a poor public image. It was born out of the 1960s, they said, when continuation schools were regarded as "dumping grounds" for delinquents.

"Continuation schools have had a bad rap," said McLaughlin. "People think we're full of rabble-rousers who don't learn. That's not the way it operates. The state expects these kids to learn and we expect them to learn."

"In the past," said Alessandro student Tana McMcann, "people thought we were all dropouts and loadies (drug users). I think it's getting better now."

Kavanaugh, the Alessandro teacher, said it wasn't just high school students and the general public who shared that view.

"I think a lot of teachers at Hemet High School were very surprised that I could leave a comprehensive high school that has a name, a reputation, to go over where? Many of them don't know what's going on over here. They don't know that we don't have kids smoking in front of the school and (don't have) kids taking drugs. I think people who have been here know the truth.

"When I drive over to Hemet High School," she said, "I see a number of kids standing out in front of the school smoking. Nothing is done. Here, no one is smoking."

The important thing to Alessandro Principal Jim Smith, he said, is that a third of the approximately 400 students who take at least one class a year at his school eventually earn a high school diploma.

"You're talking about a third that wouldn't get one if we weren't here," he said.

Mountain View High School

- Address: 1189 De Anza Drive, San Jacinto.
- Grades: 9-12.
- Enrollment: 37 students.
- Size: 10 acres.
- Capacity: Three portable classrooms, 60 students.
- Staff: Lead teacher Jack McLaughlin, one other teacher and two support staff members.
- History: Opened Sept. 7, 1971, as part of a campus that also contained the district's Teen Mother program. A year later, the Teen Mother program was moved to San Jacinto Elementary School. The San Jacinto Unified School District plans to move the continuation school to new quarters in the fall, preferably at Mt. San Jacinto Community College, and to open a new elementary school on the De Anza Drive campus.
- School colors: Royal blue and white.
- School mascot: Warriors.

Source: San Jacinto Unified School District

Alessandro High School

- Address: 136 N. Ramona St., Hemet.
- Grades: 10-12 (for students ages 16 through 18).
- Enrollment: 207 students.
- Size: Half an acre.
- Capacity: six portable classrooms, 200 students.
- Staff: Principal Jim Smith, seven teachers and four support staff members.
- History: Opened in 1970 as part of Hemet High School at Dartmouth Street and Mayberry Avenue. Moved in 1972 to the former Alessandro Elementary School behind its present campus. Moved to Ramona Street campus in 1975. The Hemet Unified School District plans to move the school to a larger site next fall, where two more classrooms and a multi-purpose room could be added.
- School colors: None.
- School mascot: None.

Source: Principal Jim Smith

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Special Learning Centers Provide Last Chance for Troubled Students

(3)

By C.L. SMITH MUÑIZ
Courant Staff Writer

The room is small, a padded cubicle in which students are made to stand in a corner, hands at their sides. Speech and movement are not allowed, not even twitching fingers.

It is, for all practical purposes, a cell, a temporary hell for violent or misbehaving students. Educators, however, call it a time-out room because it also is a place for a student to calm down.

There are several such rooms at the two special education learning centers in Hartford.

"What does it do?" asked A. Ray Petty III, the centers' administrator. "It's boring. It's punishing as hell. It's total boredom."

Petty, 38, supervises the 156 students now in the program, most of whom at one time were labeled emotionally disturbed, violent or stupid. For all of them, the learning centers are their last chance at an education.

"Keep in mind," Petty said, "these are the worst students in the school system."

The learning centers, started four years ago, are part of the school system's programs for special education students, a classification that includes everyone from violent youngsters to the mentally retarded.

The centers feature strict discipline and a structured curriculum for all grades. Students are specifically told what is acceptable behavior. Teachers and teaching assistants are firm and unyielding.

Time-outs, the name for the disciplinary sessions, are frequent and are called without hesitation. A session in the cubicle might last 15 minutes for lying, for example, or 30 minutes for becoming agitated. Time is added for talking or moving after punishment begins.

"We set a very high level of expectations," Petty said, "and we accept very little less than that. As you look around, you see no graffiti on the wall, no vandalism, no outsiders hanging out."

However, success in the program is not measured easily. Rather, small things — like the lack of spray paint in the third-floor hallways at one center in the old Kinsella School or the lack of thefts from the open lockers at the second learning center in Bellevue Square — are small symbols of victory.

Petty said that of the over 300 students who have attended or are attending the learning centers, 52 have transferred back to regular schools and 75 have transferred to institutional homes or similar programs or have moved from the city. Two have graduated with enough credits for a diploma from their neighborhood school or from the Board of Education. Another 45 dropped out after age 16.

He also said only one of six students who transferred back to a regular school has returned a second time because of violent behavior, although others have returned because of emotional problems or chronic truancy.

Students, he said, have stayed in the program for as short as three months and as long as three years. Students are not expelled or suspended from the program, regardless of their actions.

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Antonio, 16, lay flat on the floor, restrained by eight staff members. One person held his right leg, another the left. A couple of people pinned his arms. A cupped hand covered his mouth, preventing swearing.

It was a violent outburst, not an infrequent incident. Antonio — not his real name — had been showing firecrackers to his fellow students and had refused to hand them over when a teacher caught him. He began to get angry and the teacher yelled "staff," the code word for help.

Antonio struggled periodically, but his efforts were fruitless. His muffled curses were continuous. Occasionally, his head would wrest free and the voice would turn clear and vituperative.

"O.K. (Antonio), the job is up to you," David Freedman, a 31-year-old vocational education teacher, said during a moment of quiet. "You are not going to leave until you get under control."

The muffled answer was a two-word epithet. Antonio continued to struggle.

Nevertheless, Freedman and others kept talking, trying to calm Antonio. They wiped sweat from his forehead and hands.

"We don't play games; we don't kid them," said Petty, who happened to be present at the time.

Antonio has a troubled background common among Petty's students. He lives with his mother and is part of a broken family. His behavior has been a problem at least since September 1971, when he was suspended from first grade until his mother went to school for a conference.

"He's a nice kid," Petty said. "He just has a hard time containing his behavior. He just gets too violent."

It took only 30 minutes for Antonio to calm down after the outburst, an improvement from past incidents. He then spent at least 30 more minutes in the time-out room as punishment.

The next morning he arrived at school on time, without fireworks.

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Behavior at the centers is clearly defined. Deviation is not tolerated. That, in part, explains why most of the students eventually conform, eventually realize there is little that can be done to get their way, Petty said.

"All the kids are highly manipulative," he said. "And one of the tools of manipulation is violence. Just because you have a problem with the kid, you don't write him off. We tell them, 'There's nothing you can do that will get you kicked out, so forget about that.' We tell them, 'You will be here until you are ready for another program, whether it be up or down.'"

But discipline is not the only tool of instruction. Students are praised repeatedly when they do well. They receive a daily report card from each teacher with grades based on a scale of one to four. Students with the highest number of points at the end of each month are rewarded with a school outing.

"They need attention," said Freddie Narvaez, a 26-year-old teaching assistant. "They will do something distracting to get it. But you must give them attention in a positive way."

The program has a $577,000 budget and a staff of 26 teachers and 16 teaching assistants to deal with the students, mostly black or Hispanic males.

The assistants, used commonly throughout the school system, are not certified to teach, though they may conduct a class when a teacher leaves the classroom because of an emergency.

The assistants offer a wide range in age and background — at least two were gang members when they were younger. Among other duties, they help restrain and discipline students, distribute bus tokens, take attendance and supervise time outs.

The students are divided into five groups, each identified by a letter from the Greek alphabet. Depending on the group, there are either five or 10 students per class.

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Students are enrolled in the learning centers only when parents, teachers and school administrators agree it is the best alternative for the youngster. Petty said he has the right to reject a student but rarely does.

"I will say that the majority of students are here because of the system's inability to deal with them," Petty said. "It's not to say they don't have problems."

Petty and many of his staff members feel discipline is lax at regular schools for numerous reasons. For example, Petty said, administrators mete out punishment at many schools. Consequently, he believes, students lose respect for their teachers.

"Absolutely, there's just so little accountability," said Brenda L. Jorgensen, a teacher who transferred to one of the learning centers this year from Weaver High School.

"I had a girl of foster parents who fought and cussed in the classroom. I sent her to the vice principal. Two minutes later, she was back in my classroom with a note from the vice principal saying to call the mother first. . . . Now, am I going to be able to discipline children?

"I was unhappy at Weaver because of total frustration with the process. The classes were too large. Here," she said, "if they can't do the work, they stay until they can do the work."

School Superintendent Hernan LaFontaine and Thomas B. McBride, city school board president, both say they like Petty's program, but they dispute Petty's and Jorgensen's assertions to some extent. But, McBride agreed that citywide disciplinary standards have eroded.

"We have gotten very permissive," McBride said. "Ten years ago, my mother and father would not have thought about it twice when told one of their eight children was slapped by a teacher."

Petty, a private person whose gruff demeanor covers a seemingly benevolent nature, is the program's heartbeat. He started the program with another teacher, a teaching assistant and five students and has carefully nurtured its growth.

"I'm taking kids others have called educationally unsalvageable and teaching them to read, to write," the Boston native said. "My God, what a challenge."

He is blunt and honest, a man who will berate a student in the morning and vouch for him in court in the afternoon. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Bolivia, he is the only Spanish-speaking auxiliary state trooper at the Hartford Barracks. Auxiliary troopers are part-time state police employes with limited police powers.

"It's interesting," he said. "It gives me a different perspective on the criminal justice system. It gives me a look at both sides. Law enforcement is not an 'us-they' situation. A policeman is an extension of our own need for structure in society. There's no need to be enemies."

Petty works the interstate highways every Friday from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. He also walks the city streets on his own time, counseling North End gang members in trouble with police. A police scanner at his Williams Street home helps keep track of neighborhood activities.

He once hired Benny Gonzalez, president of the Ghetto Brothers, an area gang, as a teaching assistant for the learning centers. However, that angered some city officals, including Robert F. Ludgin, then deputy mayor. Gonzalez, a convicted felon, resigned.

"Petty's not a good politician," said Barry Small, a vocational specialist at the learning centers. "He's a good program director.

"It's not that he is gruff. He's straight. He's just not what the Board of Education would consider a polished administrator. He doesn't have time for political amenities. He is a humanitarian, not a bureaucrat."

Petty, one of the first bilingual teachers the city hired, started working for the school system in 1968. Academically, he is a dissertation away from a doctorate in educational administration from the University of Connecticut.

Divorced and without children, he spends much of his time with the city's Hispanic community and serving on various boards and associations, including the Greater Hartford Group Homes for Adolescent Males, the American Cancer Society's area chapter and the Interracial Scholarship Fund of Greater Hartford.

"I get involved in Hartford. Hartford is my home," Petty said. "Lets make it a better place to live."

From meeting rooms to the North End streets to the learning centers, Petty's focus is the same — troubled youngsters.

Esteban — not his real name — is one of Petty's successes. A 17-year-old high school freshman, he entered the program as a juvenile offender and frequent truant. His math and reading skills were at a fourth grade level and he was known as a youngster who got frustrated easily.

"This kid used to get so mad, he would bite the floor and growl," Small said. "It was really unnerving."

Today, Small said, Esteban is taking several courses at Bulkeley High School — receiving As and Bs — in preparation for a return to a regular school. He also is playing basketball for Hartford Public High School, his neighborhood school. He is one of 25 students involved in this part of the overall program.

"We didn't do anything miraculous with him other than provide a tight structure and not allow him to be a pain," Petty said.

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Last Chance

A. Ray Petty III, 43

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